

THE VEHICLES OF GOD AND GODDESS (HINDU RELIGIOUS)

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Abstract

This paper is 'The Vehicles of God and Goddess (Hindu Religious)'. The aim of paper is different type of Hindu cults and their important of Hindu culture were described in archaeological point of views. In ancient day of India, most of the people worshiped so many gods and goddess. They believed the 'deva'. Each deva had their own vehicles. According to the legend, they had 55 animals, now another have been found was '**Black cat**'. This finding cause there may be left a lot of animal to find out for Hindu vehicles. This paper present thinking and finding by archaeological point of view of Hindu custom and religion.

Introduction

The term '*vahana*' is a Pali word means 'vehicle or carrier of something.' The Myanmar was known as 'Vo'. In Myanmar tradition 'Vo' has been used by royal family such as King, Queen, Prince, Princess, Monks and other elites. In the religious view, ancient day of India some of the people worship spirits, and then a lot of god appeared in Hindu religion. The people believed god and goddess with their own vehicles. They believed that gods were shining. The brightness or wisdom is called deva in Sanskrit. Therefore, they called gods as deva. The Indian had four vedas in Sanskrit language.

The word vahana also means either any vehicle or animals which can be ridden. Therefore, it can be said that there are two kinds of vahana. They are animal vahana and nonanimalvahana. The gods and goddess in Brahmanism and Hindusim have their respective vahanas. There are over three million animals in the world. They lived in different habitats. Basically, animal can be classified into two main groups- vertebrate and invertebrate. According to the record, most of the vehicles are animals. They are only 55 animal vehicles of gods and goddess of Hindusim.

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History of *Vahanas*

Indra

According to the Hindu Vedas, Indra is the god of rain and thunderstorms. He is a bringer of rain and lives in Thavataimsa. Indra figure can be found in Buddhist art and architecture. Indra and Brahma appear as attendants of the Buddha.

Indra's *svahara* is mythical creature – three headed white elephant, and its name is Airavata. Airavata represents strong, brave, and trustful. It is believed that Indra can give good fortune to his believers.



Brahma

Brahma is the god of creation. Brahma appears at the lotus stem that came out of the navel of the reclining Vishnu. So he created five heads. The fifth head was at the top so that he could see her when she reached in the sky. However, the fifth head was chopped off by Siva. Therefore, Brahma is usually illustrated with four heads.

Brahma's *vahara* is swan or goose, a brahmanical duck. It is believed that brahmanical duck can fly very fast and connect between the sky and water. The elegant swan is symbolic of intelligence.



Saravati

Saravati is the goddess of wisdom. She is graceful, intelligent, generous, young and having good will. Saravati is one of the popular goddesses in Myanmar. She was mentioned in Veda texts. The original name of Saravati is Saraswati. Saras means water and wati means having. Her name literally means water goddess. She is the consort of Brahma and the symbol of knowledge and wisdom.

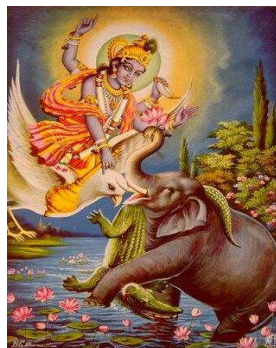
Another name of Saravati is Vani. Her vahana is a swan. The elegant swan is symbolic of intelligence. Sometimes, she rides peacock or lion or sheep. The peacock represents arrogance and pride over its beauty.



Vishnu

The god Vishnu is popular among its believers because he is the preserver and maintainer.

Vishnu's vahana is Garuda, a giant bird god. The word Garuda is derived from the Pali word Garudha. Actually, he is a mythical being a bird with a human head with a falcon's beak. He is also known as serpent-slayer.



Lakshmi

Lakshmi is the goddess of fortune and wealth. She represents the beautiful and bountiful aspect of nature. She is the wife of Vishnu. She was also the wife of Vishnu in his previous incarnations. When he was a dwarf his wife, name was Kamalā. Prathurama her name was Dhārani. When he was an ideal person, Ramā, her name was Sida.

Her vahana is wise old white owl. The owl symbolized patience and intelligence. It also has the mythical powers of fortune telling. Sometimes, she mounts on the tiger. Tiger represents brave.



Shiva

Shiva is one of the main deities of Hinduism. He is the destroyer and the restorer. The high-caste calls him as Maha Deva, and the low-caste calls him as Bhimā or Rudra. Some Hindu texts mention that there are 48 names of Shiva.

Shiva is creator, preserver and destroyer. His vahana is bull (nandi). The bull represents strength and strong. His main consort is Pavati. Hindu people believe that he is the destroyer. He also represents the richness.



Kali

Kali is consort of god Shiva. She is also known as Maha Devī or Maha Mata. She is a destructive mother goddess like her spouse, Shiva.

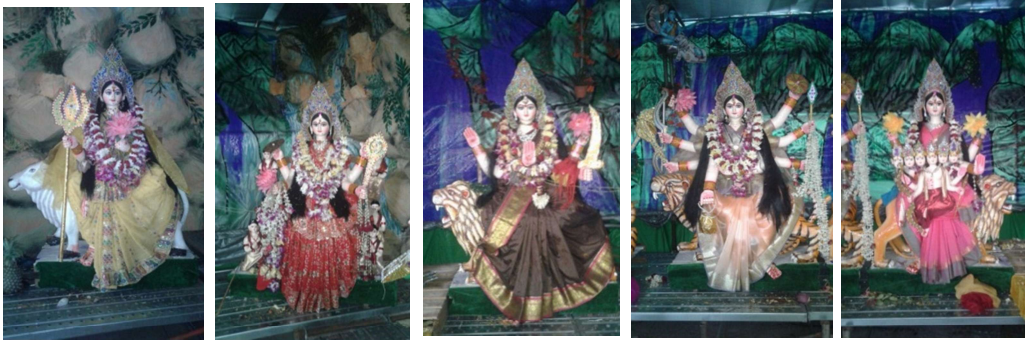
Kali represents mother. Most of her features are auspicious and fearful. She is riding a lion representing brave and industrious but sometime she can also be seen on a tiger. She has four arms. She also rides the lion. Lion represents brave, strong.



Nine Forms of Kali

- (1) The name of the one form of Kali is Srī Shyakpukrī Kali's worshippers believe that she can help not to break their virtue. Her vahana is bull (Nandi). Nandi is helpful animal for human.
- (2) Srī Bahmācārīnī is another form of Kali. She protects the man who is paragon of virtue. She has no vahana.
- (3) Another form of Kali is Srī Kyandavamtā her duty is to help the people who continuously keep the virtues in their whole lives. Her vahana is lion. Lion is the king of animal, and it represents brave and industrious.
- (4) Srī Kurhmanda is the goddess and she protects the economy and brings good fortune. Her vahana is Tiger.
- (5) Srī ehakandamātā helps young people to be good nature, intelligence, educated and success in their life. She also rides the lion.

- (6) Srī Kashyāyanī is another form of Kali. The worshippers of Sri Kashyāyanī believe that she can give good offspring. Her vahana is Tiger.
- (7) Srī Kālaralarī is the goddess. The worshippers believe that she can protect them from danger. Her vahana is mule. Mule represents perseverance.
- (8) Srī mahāgorī is another form of Kali. She is symbol of love. She can make to meet lovers, to become happy marriage and family, and bring good cheers. The bull is her vahana. Sometime her vahana is crocodile.
- (9) Srī Siddhidālari can give good offspring. Her vahana is lotus. Lotus represents purity and cool.



Ganesha

Ganesha is a fat elephant headed god. He is the remover of obstacles. He has only one tusk. He mounts on a mouse. Mouse has the ability of gnawing its way through most things. It represents Ganesha's ability to destroy every obstacle.

He is one of the most popular Hindu gods. His parents are Shiva and Parvati. He is their elder son and his brother is the god Cakanda. The incarnations of Cakanda are Kārtikeya and Murugan.

The term Ganesha means the leader of gods. He is gentle and wise. His large head symbolized wise and large ears symbolized knowledge. According to the Puranas, Ganesha has two sons, their names are mentioned as Subha and Lābha.



Kārtikeya (Kattakeyay)

Kārtikeya is the war lord who leads the Shiva's army. He is a son of Shiva and Parvati. He has six heads and six arms. He is also known as Kumā.

Once, Indra and Asūrā fought each other. Indra's army was defeated by Asūrā's army. Kārtikeya became the general of Indra's army. He could fight back Asūrā's army and won the battle.

He is also known as Chamukha because he has six heads. Cha means six and Mukha means head. His vahana is peacock, and sometimes he rides

rhinoceros. Peacock symbolizes happiness, peace and tranquility. In contrast, it represents fighting and war.



Brahmanism in the Contemporary Records

The evidences of Brahmana art and architecture, images and objects of Brahmanism are found in Myanmar. Most of them were belonged to Bagan Period.

Some facts which were concerned with Brahmanism are also found in the contemporary records. King Kyansittha, one of the kings Bagan Dynasty recorded about the founding of his new palace. He inscribed about the founding of his new palace on six tall four-sided sandstone pillars.

Kyansittha's Palace Inscriptions are ones of the most well-known inscriptions of Bagan Period. They mentioned about the full account of the founding of new palace and numerous ceremonies which held on the occasion.

Followers of Hinduism believe that the Buddha is the ninth avatar of the god Vishnu. Silver coins which were minted in Sandra Dynasty of Rakhine bear the sings of conch shell and bull. These coins were belonged to the fourth century CE.



Conch shell is one of the attributes of the god Vishnu and the bull is Shiva. Vishnu images are found in Bagan. Nat Hlaung Kyaung of Bagan is well known by the reclining Vishnu and his ten incarnation images.

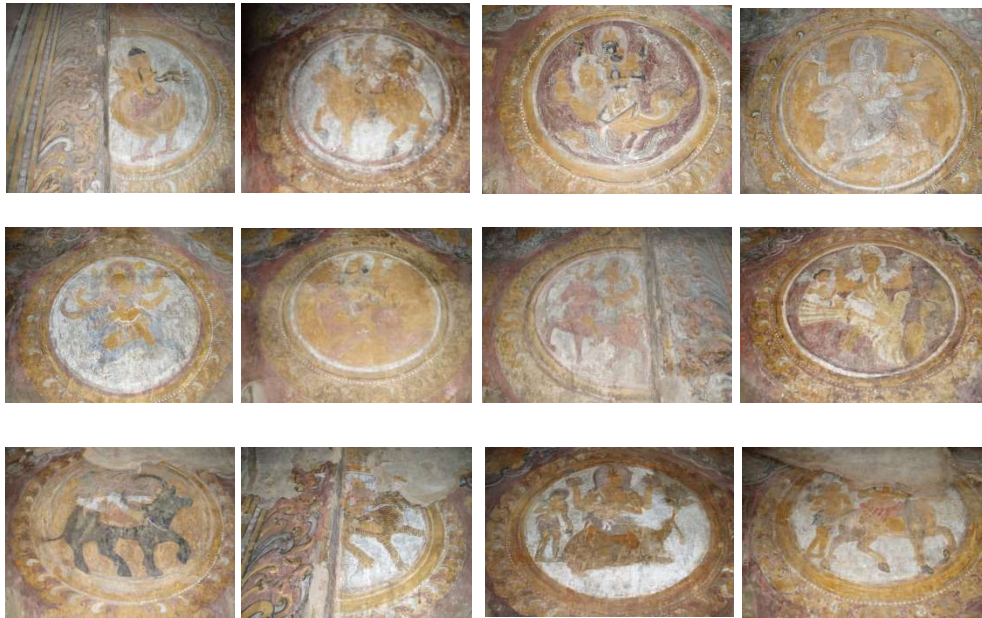
The most beautiful standing Shiva image is housed in Bagan Archaeological Museum. It was found in Nat Hlaung Kyaung but it is not the original place of that Shiva image.

Mural paintings which are concerned with Hinduism can be seen on the walls of some temples of Bagan Peirod.

Abeyadana Temple is well-known for its wall paintings. These figures were painted on the East, West and South outer walls of the corridor.

There are 14 tondos. These paintings are depicted about the Vedic or Hindu gods and goddesses. They are riding on their respective vahana.

The depictions of Hindu gods and goddesses are as follow: 1. Brahmā on Hamsa, 2. Shiva on Nandi, 3. Vishnu on Snake, 4. Devi on Lion, 5. Six-armed god on a charging Elephant, 6. Rāma on Hanumān, 7. Revanta on Horse, 8. God on cuckoo, 9. Yamamin on Buffalo, 10. Mara with soldier on Lion, 11. The river-goddess Yamunā on Tortoise, 12. Two armed God on Buffalo, 13. God on horse, 14. Indra with Indrāni on Airāvata.





The evidences of Brahma images are also found in Mye Bontha Phaya Hla Temple.

There are 51 Brahma images in the niches on the throne of Buddha image. However, 31 Brahma images are in good condition, 19 images are damage and 1 image is missing.



The evidences of Hinduism in Myanmar archaeological context are found not only in Bagan but also in Sri Ksetra, one of the Pyu cities. A sandstone rectangular slab which bears Vishnu and Lakshmi in bold relief is house in Hmawza Archaeological Museum.



The top of the slab is broken off. Vishnu is standing on his vahana, garuda, and Lakshmi is standing on the double lotus plinth. Sri Ksetra city was founded by the god Vishnu.

Conclusion

The Hindu vehicles are popularly used by most of the Indian art and architecture. Indian art and architecture reached the extensive relationship in other country, and also reached in Myanmar. According to archaeological finding of artifact show that symbol of Hindu vehicles, for example, on coins, wall painting and so on. Especially in Bagan area, some monument were set up in the riches on the scenes of Hindu Gods and Goddess, for example, sculpture of Brahma's head in Nan Phaya and many kind of god statues in Nat Hlaung Kyaung. Moreover, 51 Brahma images were set up in the throne of Buddha image in Myay Bon Thar Phaya Hla Temple, beautiful scenes of Hindu Gods and Goddess were painted on the walls of Abeyadana temples. Each Hindu Gods and Goddess is riding their respective animals Vahana. These animals have their own powers. Their powers also represent the powers of their master. Now, the new finding of Hindu vahana was '**Black cat**'. It was ride by *Shashthi* goddess. Therefore, we can say that 'the vehicles of gods and goddess' tend to think and find of Hindu custom and religion in archaeological point of view.

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